

The Fifth Column

Harvey Ovshinsky

1966

Paul Krassner, editor of a magazine of free thought, criticism, and satire, called *The Realist*, was in Detroit last month. In his “Evening with A Self-Styled Phony,” Krassner turned people on to what turns him on. *The Realist*, for example:

“I wake up every morning and I giggle: I’m the editor of *The Realist* ha-ha-ha. It really is strange because I’ve been doing it for eight years now and I really haven’t accepted that fact. If I walk past a store and it says ‘boy wanted,’ I stop—I say ‘maybe I can still get the job.’ I really don’t relate to this—you know what it’s like; working, you know, not going to a job, it’s like playing hooky all day long. I mean you can go to an afternoon movie and you don’t get in trouble. I have a secretary to take the calls while I’m gone. It’s very strange, you know, just putting out a magazine and not getting paid for it.”

Krassner makes what money he does by writing a column for *Cavalier* magazine, sort of a poor man’s *Playboy*, published in New York. Krassner had a lot to say about *Playboy*, and he recalled how publisher Hugh Hefner invited him to spend a weekend at the Chicago mansion. He slept with a playmate who was frigid and still dreams about turning on in the place. Speaking of *Playboy*, Krassner talked about the mother who turns to the fold-out and accuses her son of blowing his nose in it. And then he went on about staple bruises...

“They were telling me all these strange sex laws you have here. You can get arrested for intercourse if the woman is on top—and I would really like to make a test case. Call up the police—‘Hello, you don’t know me, but I’m in the middle of sex participation now, and I’m on bottom. I’m at such and such address.’ Would they come? I mean before I did?”

“I’m for freedom for atheists—well, that’s everybody, now that God is dead. We had this headline in *The Realist* that said ‘God is Alive in Argentina,’ and I keep thinking that the next issue we’ll have a follow-up: ‘God Has Been Kidnapped by Two Israeli agents.’ After that they could have, alright, two Israeli agents kidnap him, and then he’s tried for crimes against humanity—no, for Acts of God, that’s right!”

But God and Israeli agents and vaseline (“when they convicted Ralph Ginzberg, they made vaseline illegal”) are not the only things that Krassner thinks about. There were a lot of non-sexual, non-religious tangents he got onto. Take farts for instance...

“I don’t know of any other word for ‘fart.’ Does anybody? Flatus—no, that’s a noun. I mean a verb—flatuate? Possibly. Can’t you see it? You get out an unabridged dictionary and look it up. Here it is—flatuate: to fart.”

Krassner talked about President Johnson, too; and after reminding us of the infamous picture of LBJ exposing his gall-bladder scar, he asked his audience what would have happened if he had a hemorrhoid operation?

But Krassner doesn’t always use “dirty” words like fart and fuck and intercourse and love. He will just not ignore them if they will do the job. Redeeming value is what he thinks about, and he knows that one man’s redeeming value is another man’s pornography. Civil liberties is really a concern of Krassner, and he had something to say about that, too:

“People would like Ralph Ginzburg not to be Sammy Glick. The same thing applies to Madalyn Murray—it would be nice if you had Irene Dunn challenging the law, but she’s not the one who’s doing it.”

I suppose people would like Clifton Webb to edit *The Realist*, but he's not the one who's doing it either, and after listening to Paul Krassner on Mother's Day, I'm glad that he's not.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/9-june-1966/the-fifth-column>
Fifth Estate #9, June, 1966

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